



Michigan State AFL-CIO

419 Washington Square South, Suite 200 • Lansing, Michigan 48933-2138

MARK T. GAFFNEY, *President*

TINA ABBOTT, *Secretary-Treasurer*

March 15, 2011

Testimony before the Michigan House of Representatives Oversight, Reforms and Ethics Committee

Michael Keller, Legislative Director

Michigan State AFL-CIO

Re: House Bill 4059

The bill before you today would amend the Public Employee Relations Act to prohibit public employers from paying union officials for time used conducting union business.

Permitting union officials to become engaged early on in a problem will typically allow for a quicker and sometimes less costly resolution. Addressing employee concerns is part of good business practices. The result can lead to better employer relations, higher productivity, process improvements, a safer worksite and improvements in quality.

Prohibiting union officials from that early engagement, as these bills would do, leave problems unchecked and allow them to grow in complexity and severity becoming more difficult to manage and resolve.

The practice of paying union officials to conduct legitimate union business is currently a decision made between the employer and the local union. The decision whether to use paid time is made when both parties discuss the issue, weigh the costs and benefits and agree what the best practice is for their operation.

This practice is not in every contract. In many union contracts, union leave is unpaid, except for grievance and problem solving issues. The size of the workgroup, the nature of the work and other factors are considered when these decisions are made. These should be weighed at the local level where the people doing the work know which practices work and which do not.

Michigan AFL-CIO opposes this bill because it is unnecessary and could cause hardship to our members and disruption in State services.

Thank you for your time.